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UNICEF report on recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

Summary

In accordance with Executive Board decision 2001/4, this report summarizes the UNICEF response to recommendations contained in reports and notes of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) that are directly relevant to UNICEF and have not yet been considered by the Executive Board. The five reports and five notes considered in this document were issued by the JIU during the period September 2008 through August 2009.

I. Overview

1. JIU reports and notes are submitted to the Executive Heads of the organizations concerned, who then report to their respective Executive Boards on measures taken to implement the recommendations, as appropriate. The present report provides (a) summaries of JIU reports and notes prepared from September 2008 through August 2009 that directly pertain to the administration and management of UNICEF; (b) comments on pertinent recommendations in the reports and notes; and (c) the implementation status of JIU recommendations (see annexes 1 and 2).

2. Since the presentation of the previous UNICEF report (E/ICEF/2009/6) to the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2009, UNICEF has continued its dialogue with the JIU on issues contained in the reports and notes, and on follow-up to recommendations. This interaction has helped to enhance the transparency and

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effectiveness of the UNICEF response to the recommendations. There has also been strengthened cooperation among member organizations of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to improve the consistency and coherence of the response of these organizations to JIU recommendations.

II. Reports and notes of the JIU of direct relevance to UNICEF

3. The five reports and five notes of the JIU of direct relevance to UNICEF are summarized below, and comments by UNICEF on the relevant JIU recommendations are provided. Annex 1 lists the reports and notes of the JIU and the number of relevant recommendations. Annex 2 lists recommendations of relevance to the Executive Board and presents remarks by UNICEF.

A. Junior Professional Officer/Associate Expert/Associate Professional Officer programmes in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2008/2)

4. This report intends to provide an overall assessment of the current situation of the above-mentioned programmes in the United Nations system organizations, including the legislative basis, rules and regulations, and operational practice, and the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the programmes. The report recommends measures to improve their political, organizational and operational conditions.

5. UNICEF concurs with the four recommendations relevant to the Fund. A clear UNICEF policy on the use of Junior Professional Officers is already in place (CF/AI/2009-006). A number of procedures and tools have been, or are being, developed to monitor and ensure the implementation of the Junior Professional Officer programme, including its supervision, training and learning elements.

B. Management review of environmental governance within the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2008/3)

6. The objective of the report is to strengthen the governance of and programmatic and administrative support for Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) by United Nations organizations through identifying measures to promote enhanced coordination, coherence and synergies between MEAs and the United Nations system. The aim is to increase the contribution of the United Nations system towards a more integrated approach to international environmental governance and management at national, regional and international levels.

7. UNICEF supports the two relevant recommendations, and welcomes the call made by the JIU to develop a joint system-wide planning framework to manage and coordinate environmental activities. UNICEF maintains that a clear understanding on the division of labour among development agencies, the United Nations Environment Programme and the MEAs should be developed based on extensive consultations. UNICEF is also of the view that stronger coordination and coherence between United Nations agencies and MEAs are needed to ensure the successful implementation of a results-based management framework endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 60/257.

C. National execution of technical cooperation projects (JIU/REP/2008/4)

8. The report reviews the evolution of national execution (NEX) of technical cooperation projects and the identification and dissemination of lessons learned and best practices, and related issues, including audit, monitoring and evaluation.

9. This report has been carefully reviewed by UNICEF. The central modality of development cooperation for UNICEF is the country programme of cooperation, which is implemented by national partners, with UNICEF technical assistance. UNICEF has been sharing lessons learned and good practices of the country programme of cooperation with other United Nations system organizations through various channels. The concept and modality of Technical Cooperation Projects are not used by UNICEF, and the NEX concept does not neatly fit the way UNICEF operates.

10. UNICEF welcomes the eight relevant recommendations, which are being implemented.

D. Review of information and communication technology (ICT) hosting services in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2008/5)

11. The purpose of the report is to provide the governing bodies and executive heads of the United Nations system organizations with a comparative study of the main ICT hosting services, and to identify best practices used by the United Nations system organizations, with a view to reducing costs and enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of the ICT infrastructure and operations of these organizations.

12. UNICEF welcomes all six relevant recommendations in the report.

13. UNICEF strictly follows international standards and industry best practices to ensure the quality of cost-benefit analysis of ICT services. While a "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats" (SWOT) analysis is appropriate to evaluate IT investments, UNICEF holds the view that the financial merits should be assessed using Total Cost of Ownership analysis for significant IT investments such as ICT hosting services.

14. One recommendation proposes joint procurement of ICT hosting services. UNICEF will accept the procurement decision of the lead agency, assuming that UNICEF is part of the tender-evaluation team and that the decision is in the best interests of UNICEF.

E. Review of management of Internet websites in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2008/6)

15. This report assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of Internet websites as a communication tool for information dissemination. The report stresses the importance of related issues such as Content Management System, accessibility and multilingualism.

16. UNICEF agrees with the five relevant recommendations in the report, which are either implemented or under implementation. The web projects of UNICEF have benefited from current official guidelines and work practices. UNICEF publishes its global websites in five of the six United Nations official languages. UNICEF ranks high among United Nations system organizations in the use of official United Nations languages on corporate websites. Continued efforts will be made to improve website governance, update website strategy and policy, and implement multilingualism.

17. UNICEF firmly supports efforts in achieving progressive harmonization of policies, standards and guidelines for websites in order to bring greater coherence across the United Nations system.

F. Common services at Nairobi (JIU/NOTE/2008/1)

18. This note assesses progress made and identifies any obstacles to further development of common services of United Nations system organizations located at Nairobi. The report makes recommendations to improve coordination and coherence at the country level and yield cost savings.

19. Overall, UNICEF accepts the four recommendations of direct relevance to UNICEF, three of which are either implemented or partially implemented. Implementation of one recommendation on the draft memorandum of understanding on common premises services at Nairobi is outstanding. While UNICEF supports the findings in the JIU note, the Fund also seeks further clarification on the base rental cost and rationale for the pricing.

G. Common services at the locations of United Nations Regional Commissions (JIU/NOTE/2008/2)

20. This note reviews the common services among all United Nations system organizations represented at the locations of United Nations Regional Commissions, with the objective of assessing progress and identifying obstacles to further expansion. The following duty stations are considered: Addis Ababa (Ethiopia); Bangkok (Thailand); Beirut (Lebanon); and Santiago de Chile (Chile).

21. UNICEF concurs with four JIU recommendations of direct relevance to UNICEF. Although it is not physically present in any of the premises of the regional commissions, UNICEF does share common services with the United Nations Development Group agencies in the locations of the regional commissions. UNICEF welcomes further review by the JIU relating to common services issues, including the current funding challenge for the entire United Nations system.

H. Corporate consultancies in United Nations system organizations: overview of the use of corporate consultancy and procurement and contract management issues (JIU/NOTE/2008/4)

22. The objective of the note is to review the use of corporate consultancies in the United Nations system organizations, including relevant rules and regulations, operations, efficiency and effectiveness.

23. There are 22 JIU recommendations, 16 of which are directly relevant to UNICEF and are implemented. One recommendation is to ensure that a standard policy on conflict of interest is in place and integrated into the general conditions of contracts. In addition to having controls over the separation of duties at all levels, the contractual provisions of UNICEF include clauses on conflict of interest. UNICEF guidelines on financial disclosure statements of staff (CF/EXD/2007-002) further protect the organization from potential conflict of interest.

24. Moreover, UNICEF has put in place necessary guidelines, processes and regulations, a database, a training programme, and support and advice services for its staff. For example, the new Guidelines for Procurement of Services, including corporate consultancies, are contained in the Supply Manual. These guidelines will be reviewed in 2010 after an assessment is made of their use and impact on practices.

I. Corporate sponsoring in the United Nations system: principles and guidelines (JIU/NOTE/2009/1)

25. This note is to assess the principles, criteria and guidelines governing corporate sponsoring activities, with a view to reducing associated risks and to enhance the coherence of such activities from a system-wide perspective.

26. Two recommendations are of direct relevance to UNICEF. One is implemented and the other is under implementation. One recommendation calls for financial disclosure measures for officials in the United Nations system organizations dealing with the private sector, in the context of avoiding conflict of interest. In 2007, UNICEF launched its financial disclosure programme, which includes measures to prevent conflict of interest.

27. UNICEF particularly supports a system-wide effort led by the CEB to develop a basic partnership training programme to cover the common needs of staff in the various system organizations dealing with the private sector. UNICEF staff members can take advantage of the opportunities provided by the United Nations Staff College and United Nations Development Programme training programmes. In late 2007, UNICEF developed a customized private sector partnership training programme for its staff across the globe. The training concepts were tested in two regions during 2008 and rolled out in 2009.

J. Internships in the United Nations system (JIU/NOTE/2009/2)

28. This note aims to identify key features, best practice and lessons learned for further improvement and c'arification of the definition and implementation of the internship programmes across the United Nations system.

29. Of the nine recommendations, UNICEF concurs with the seven having direct relevance to the Fund. These recommendations are being, or have been, implemented. One recommendation is that United Nations system organizations ensure that interns provide an evaluation of the internship programme at the end of their assignment and that follow-up measures are put in place to distil lessons learned, validate best practice and propose improvements in weak areas. UNICEF will implement this excellent recommendation. In addition, UNICEF will continue

to support efforts to provide more internship opportunities to nationals from developing countries.

30. Another recommendation is to eliminate the mandatory break now defined in various internship agreements so that interns can compete on an equal basis for positions. The policy of UNICEF on the mandatory break is consistent with the new United Nations contractual modalities. The break in service policy has now been modified to consist of (a) a break of three months, instead of six, between the internship and a temporary appointment offer; and (b) no break if the intern applies to, and is selected for, a fixed-term appointment.

III. Ongoing/forthcoming JIU reports and notes of relevance to UNICEF

31. UNICEF has been participating in the initial collection of information, discussions and review of several JIU draft reports and notes. At the 2011 first regular session of the Executive Board, UNICEF looks forward to presenting its comments, as appropriate, on some or all of the JIU reviews scheduled for completion in 2009 and beyond that have potential relevance to the work of UNICEF. Below is the preliminary list of such reports and notes:

(a) Off-shoring in United Nations system organizations;

(b) Towards more coherent United Nations system support to Africa;

(c) Staff mobility in the United Nations system;

(d) Work/life issues in United Nations system organizations;

(e) Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Resident Coordinators: a benchmarking framework for coherence within the United Nations system;

(f) Selection and conditions of service of executive heads in the United Nations system organizations;

(g) The transition to International Public Sector Accounting Standards in the United Nations system organizations;

(h) Travel arrangements within the United Nations system;

(i) Corporate partnerships: the role of the Global Compact, best practices and lessons learned;

(j) Ethics in the United Nations system;

(k) Management-staff relations in the United Nations system;

(l) Implementation of enterprise risk management in the United Nations system;

(m) Environmental policies and practices of the United Nations system;

(n) The evaluation function in the United Nations system.

Annex 1

List of reports and notes of the Joint Inspection Unit of relevance to UNICEF

Report/Note symbol	*Report title*	*Total recommendations*	*Total relevant recommendations*	*Recommendations of relevance to the UNICEF Executive Board**
JIU/REP/2008/2	Junior Professional Officer/Associate Expert/Associate Professional Officer programmes in the United Nations system organizations	9	4	0
JIU/REP/2008/3	Management review of environmental governance within the United Nations system	12	2	0
JIU/REP/2008/4	National execution of technical cooperation projects	11	8	2
JIU/REP/2008/5	Review of information and communication technology (ICT) hosting services in the United Nations system organizations	6	6	1
JIU/REP/2008/6	Review of management of Internet websites in the United Nations system organizations	8	5	2
JIU/NOTE/2008/1	Common services at Nairobi	7	4	0
JIU/NOTE/2008/2	Common services at the locations of United Nations Regional Commissions	9	8	0
JIU/NOTE/2008/4	Corporate consultancies in United Nations system organizations: overview of the use of corporate consultancy and procurement and contract management issues	22	16	0
JIU/NOTE/2009/1	Corporate sponsoring in the United Nations system: principles and guidelines	4	2	0
JIU/NOTE/2009/2	Internships in the United Nations system	9	9	0

* See annex 2.

Annex 2

Summary of UNICEF remarks on recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit of relevance to the UNICEF Executive Board

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
JIU/REP/2008/4: National execution of technical cooperation projects	
Recommendation 4: The General Assembly and legislative bodies of corresponding organizations should reiterate that the donors provide fewer conditioned extra-budgetary contributions, including those financing National Execution (NEX), with a view to realizing the priorities of the recipient countries; and ensuring more flexibility, predictability and geographic balance in NEX expenditures.	The concept and modality of Technical Cooperation Projects are not used by UNICEF, and the NEX concept does not fit neatly into the way UNICEF operates. For UNICEF, all technical cooperation agreements are nationally executed.
Recommendation 6: The General Assembly, in the context of its triennial comprehensive policy review to be held at its sixty-fifth session, and legislative bodies of corresponding organizations should assist recipient Governments in strengthening their capacity in the accounting and audit fields, through focused training, as required, to enable them to match the international standards.	UNICEF will, in the context of organizational improvement, help to coordinate resource mobilization to support national capacity development in the fields of financial and operational management based on national demand, and in line with the comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.
JIU/REP/2008/5: Review of information and communication technology (ICT) hosting services in the United Nations system organizations	
Recommendation 6: The governing bodies of United Nations system organizations should request the executive heads to report to their next session on the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report, in particular those recommendations aimed at defining common methodology for ICT costs/expenditures and exploring hosting solutions to take advantage of economies of scale.	Management responses to JIU recommendations are discussed in the present report.

Relevant recommendations	*Remarks*
JIU/REP/2008/6: Review of management of Internet websites in the United Nations system organizations	
Recommendation 6: The governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should establish an ad hoc committee dealing with the implementation of multilingualism on their corporate websites. The governing bodies shall review the report submitted by the ad hoc committee on the measures and financial implications to achieve language parity on their websites and take appropriate action.	UNICEF publishes its global websites in five of the six United Nations official languages, and the use of languages on its corporate websites ranks high among United Nations system organizations. The web files of UNICEF created or updated during 2007, 2008 and the first quarter of 2009 showed the following language parity levels: English 100 per cent; French 53 per cent; Spanish 48 per cent; Arabic 35 per cent; and Chinese 26 per cent. All official UNICEF Executive Board documents are available in the six official United Nations languages.
Recommendation 8: The governing bodies of United Nations system organizations should request the executive heads to report to their next session on the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report addressed to the executive heads, in particular those aimed at reforming website governance, updating website strategy and policy, and implementing multilingualism.	The UNICEF responses to JIU recommendations are discussed in the present report.